The Member of Parliament's Answer to the Country Gentleman's Letter.

Sir,

I Have perused your Letter, and shall give you my Thoughts of your Reasons in a few Words. I agree with you as to the Religious Principles of the Dissenters; but I beg leave to differ from you in your Account of their Opinion of State, and civil Constitution; for they deny the King's Supremacy in Ecclesiastical Affairs: What Havock that Opinion made in the State, when they had Power in *Scotland*, all that ever read History know, and I don't find it was ever revoked by any publick Act of their Church. I am well assured, that now, when their Power is limited, they keep up the Claim; and when the King's Commissioner has adjourned the Assembly to a certain Day, in a private Manner, they adjourn it to the same Day by their own Authority: Just as the Pope endeavoured to keep up his Claim to give Kingdoms without offending Queen *Mary*, when in a private Consistory he declared her Queen of *Ireland*, before he would give Audience to her Ambassador, in whose Credentials he knew she had assumed that Title without his Authority.

Another avowed Principle, never yet revoked by any publick Act, is their uncharitable Denial of a Toleration to any that dissent from their Communion. We are not ignorant how dangerous that Principle is to the State, and what Mischief it has done.

But, Sir, I was at a Loss to find what the Linnen Trade has to do with the *Test*, and am so still notwithstanding all you have laid about it; but surely you must have a mean Opinion of my Understanding, if you think to persuade me that the *Test* is any Persecution, much less a Persecution equal, or any way like those of Queen *Mary*, the Duke *d'Alva*, or *Lewis* XIV. and yet you seem pleased to run the Parallel, and as them transplanted the Tin Plates, woollen Manufactures, and other Arts from one Country to another, so will the *Test* transfer the Linnen Trade to *America*. This looks like a Banter on the Reason of Mankind; as if the popular Name of Linnen Manufacture and Staple Trade, brought in against all Reason and Sense, should be a Charm to lull all Reasoning asleep. —— Indeed you are pleased to tell me, the *Test* sent the People some Years ago a travelling to *America*, and then you run the Changes, of the Trade being set up there, the Markets being supplied, or our chief Markets being stocked by them; and on that false Ground you cry out, It is Time to stop the Transportations. I am sorry to say your Fact is as great a Mistake as your Way of reasoning is fallacious. The Demand for Linnen is so great, that were it true, it could not hurt us: But, Sir, are you serious when you say the *Test* occasioned these Transportations? Surely you must know that Churchmen as well as Dissenters went over in great Numbers; and I can assure you on my own Knowledge, and so will Thousands more, that in some Parts of *Ulster* more Church Families than Dissenters went over. I shall not enquire into the true Reason, but it is plain the *Test* was not, nor was ever alledged, that I heard before you told me so. —— You say the *Test* occasions the Profanation of the Sacraments: If it doth, pray, Sir, advise your Acquaintance to take it their own Way, and other People's Sins will not be laid to their Charge. But, Sir, do you really think that this Profanation is the Reason why they would have the *Test-Act* repealed? If they are in earnest, give us another as effectual as many may be found, and we shall be easy —— You call the *Test* a negative Penalty, and deny the Magistrate a Power to impose it on Account of Religion. Sir, I have already told you of some Principles dangerous to the State; that all prudent Magistrates ought to guard against, when Religion is out of the Question. —— You say, a Capacity for Employments in the State is the Birthright of every free born Subject, where a Forfeiture has not been made. I have told you the Forfeiture, dangerous Principles, the Denial of the Supremacy and Toleration. —— But where will this Argument end? I find some Dissenters have refined upon it, and have given us fair Warning what they aim at; and what must be the next Step if they gain this Point? why truly a Capacity for Ecclesiastical Employments; and if they gain that, something worse may follow. —— I shall not imitate you, Sir, by advancing Facts without Proof, or Reasons that have no Force. There is a considerable Body of Dissenters, called *New Light Men*, who I am told daily gain Ground, and they have declared against all Ecclesiastical *Tests*, and plead the Capacity for Ecclesiastical Employments to be the Birth-right of every free born Subject with as much Earnestness, as you do for Civil or Military. And they cry out Persecution, that they are all Confessors who are excluded, and declared Schismaticks by their Brethren, who will not give up their Ecclesiastical Test. Now, Sir, we have an Ecclesiastical Test as well as they. We have Articles of Religion and Subscriptions, which we dare not give up; least when the Fence is broke down, all the wild Sects of former Times should, like an Inundation, [illegible] Order, Discipline and Religion, and create as great Confusion in the State as the Church.

If we don't repeal the Civil Test, you represent us as great Persecutors as *Mary*, *Philip* and *Lewis*; and if we don't repeal the Ecclesiastical Test, some of you will represent us as great Persecutors as they have done their Brethren who threw them off. Thus, if once we take away one Guard, or suffer one of our Outworks to be carried, we see no Place where we can stop, we must by piece-meal part with all. You see, Sir, we are plainly told so by a part of the Dissenters, who are gaining Ground apace.

Your Reasoning, Sir, still supposes me to have none: You say the *Test* does not keep Protestant *Jacobites* from Places of Power and Trust. What do you mean? Sure you know it was never designed to keep them out; there is another and a stronger *Test* for them, the Oaths of Allegiance and Abjuration; and if they will swallow them, and keep their Principles, who can help it. Let their own Conscience accuse them.

And after such weak Reasons, you address your self to the Whigs, Bishops and Clergy, as if they were simple enough to be convinced without Reason, and willing to give up a Security without a Compensation. And in the [illegible] you tell us, it is no hardship, though many Dissenters should be sent from *England* and *Scotland*, to fill Places in *Ireland*.

Truly, Sir, I'm afraid I have mistaken you, and given a serious Answer to what was designed as a Jest; for he that defends a Cause with ill Arguments is generally supposed to play Booty, and mean the quite Contrary: If that be your Case, I ask your Pardon and shall be, Sir,

Your Friend and Servant.